



A Comparative Study of Translators' Styles of *The Peach Colony* Based on Corpus

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Abstract— This study conducts a comparative analysis of the translator styles in Lin Yutang's and Luo Jingguo's English translations of *The Peach Colony* (Taohuayuan Ji) using a self-built parallel corpus. By employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, the research examines linguistic features at lexical, syntactic, and textual levels, including vocabulary richness, sentence complexity, and readability. Results reveal distinct stylistic tendencies: Lin's translation favors conciseness and fluency, characterized by simpler vocabulary and compound structures, whereas Luo's version emphasizes explicitness and academic rigor, with a higher frequency of nouns and adjectives. The study highlights the impact of translators' choices on cross-cultural communication and offers insights for classical Chinese literature translation.



Keywords— *The Peach Colony*; corpus; translators' styles; comparative study

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional studies of translator style have predominantly concentrated on how translators employ various translation techniques to effectively convey the ideas, meaning, and stylistic nuances of the original text. These studies often emphasize the linguistic and cultural equivalence achieved in the translation, with the primary focus being on preserving the original author's voice and the content of the text. However, there has been relatively less attention given to understanding the role and function of the translator themselves in the translation process. The translator's influence, their choices in interpreting the text, and the impact of their own personal and cultural background have not been fully explored in early translation studies.

With the deepening of translation studies in recent decades, the research focus has gradually shifted. Scholars

have increasingly moved from a primary concern with the original text and its author to a focus on the translated text and the translator who mediates between the source and target cultures. More and more scholars have begun to pay attention to the performance of translators' styles in translations, and have conducted in-depth discussions on this (Ding&Tang, 2005:77).

Within the context of studying translator style, literary works have become an essential corpus for such investigations. Literary texts, due to their unique cultural expressions, intricate stylistic features, and their high communicative and emotional value, provide an excellent foundation for analyzing how translators navigate between languages and cultures. The translation of literary works often involves navigating rich, nuanced meanings and stylistic choices, making them an invaluable source for studying the translator's style and the strategies they

employ in rendering the original text into another language. The use of literary texts in these studies offers a lens through which scholars can explore the translator's creative decisions, their approach to maintaining or transforming the cultural and stylistic essence of the original work, and the broader implications these choices have on the reception of the translated text. Thus, literary works provide fertile ground for exploring the complex interaction between the translator, the text, and the audience.

Classical Chinese literature occupies a pivotal position in the history of world literature, particularly in its cultural, philosophical, and artistic expressions. Its influence transcends the boundaries of China, offering profound insights into the complexities of human nature, the cosmos, and societal relationships. Not only does it form the bedrock of Chinese culture, but it also stands as a treasure in the global literary heritage, enriching the world's intellectual and artistic traditions. Among the many remarkable works of classical Chinese literature, *The Peach Colony* is a famous Chinese prose poem written by the poet Tao Yuanming during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, about 418 A.D.. This story is often seen as an allegory for the idealized concept of a peaceful, harmonious life, untouched by the corruption and strife of the outside world. It has become a symbol of an unattainable utopia in Chinese literature and philosophy, and it has come to represent a perfect, idyllic place. To this day, *The Peach Colony* is still of great value for the times and for research. This paper conducts a comparative analysis of two notable English translations of *The Peach Colony*, those by Lin Yutang and Luo Jingguo, using a self-constructed corpus to closely examine their respective translation styles. By employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study seeks to identify the similarities and differences between the two translations at lexical, syntactic and textual levels. The analysis aims to uncover the specific choices made by each translator in terms of language use, tone, and stylistic approach, and to explore the reasons behind the variations. This study aims to provide a reference for the English translation practice

of classical literature, promoting the dissemination of classical Chinese literature to foreign countries.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation is a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation (Lawrence, 2004:17). At present, there are several complete English translations of *The Peach Colony*, and many famous translators have translated this travelogue prose, such as Xu Jingcheng, Lin Yutang, Fang Chong, Luo Jingguo, and Sun Dayu. Most of the studies on the English translation of *The Peach Colony* are studies on the translation strategies of a particular translator under the guidance of translation theory. For example, Chen (2021) analyzed the strategies for filling in the semantic and contextual gaps in Lin Yutang's translation from the perspective of Reception Aesthetics. Fan and Peng (2017) compared and analyzed Luo Jingguo's translation with the original text based on Catford's theory of translation transformation, and sought strategies for translating ancient Chinese literature into English.

Translator's style is only a reproduction of the original author's style, so the study of translator's style has been neglected by the academics (Hu, 2012:67). Since Mona Baker (2000) proposed the "translator's style", the study of translator's style and translation style has become important topics. As a translator's creation based on the understanding of the original work, the translation inevitably carries the "voice" of the translator. The study of the translator's style reveals the translator's unique choices in text processing, such as lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical preferences, and highlights his or her creative contribution as a "second author". Qiu (2017) compared the English translations of *San Yan Er Pai* by Han Nan and Wang Huimin and explored the differences between the two translators in terms of translator style and their causes according to Saldanha's method of translator style research. Mei and Ruan (2023) compared Zhu Shenghao's and Sun Dayu's translation to *Hamlet*, discussing the different influence of ideology, poetics and patronage on the two

translator's translation process through the analysis of specific examples.

In the 90s of the 20th century, Mona Baker(1993) established the first translation corpus, which marked the birth of translation studies. Translator's style research is combined with quantitative research methods to collect statistics through corpora. These visual data can objectively compare and analyze the translator's tendency to choose vocabulary and sentence patterns when translating, so as to summarize the translator's style. For instance, Huang and Li(2024) used AntConc and WordSmith tools to conduct statistics and analysis of translators' styles at the lexical and syntactic levels of the translation of *On Cold Damage*, and studied the differences in translators' styles from three dimensions: historical background, translator identity, and concept. Li and Meng and Guo(2024) adopts the quantitative analysis method to study the famous translator Minford and his translations of *The Deer and the Cauldron* based on the corpus research method. Similar comparative studies of translators' styles using corpus research methods have covered literature from various countries as well as on a variety of subjects. Although there are several translations of the *The Peach Colony*, there are few studies of translators' styles in relation to this well-known article.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The author extracts the original Chinese text of *The Peach Colony* from *Tao Yuanming Collection* annotated by Guo Ping(2019), and build small Chinese-English parallel corpus of *The Peach Colony* with Lin Yutang's translation(2009) and Luo Jingguo's translation(2005). These two translations are complete, and they are basically the same in the main text, which can provide sufficient and reliable corpus comparison support for the comparative study of translators' styles. It should be noted that the title "The Peach Colony" is a translated version of Lin's. Luo translates it as "A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Bloosm Spring". The author uses Lin's version as the name for the corpus because the title is highly condensed, in line with the aesthetic habits of short English titles, easy to remember, and does not make any evaluation of these

two titles.

Self-built Chinese-English parallel corpus involves the following steps. First of all, the electronic version of the original Chinese text and the two English translations were converted into word format through text recognition software, and then manually proofread and identified the wrong words, cleaned the corpus, and manually aligned. Secondly, CorpusWordparser and Free CLAWS web tagger were used to code the Chinese and English corpus for part-of-speech assignment respectively. CorpusWordParser is a specialized software tool designed for corpus linguistics and text analysis, which is used to parse, annotate, and analyze large text corpora. CLAWS (Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System) is a Part-of-Speech tagger developed by Lancaster University's UCREL team. The free web version allows users to upload texts and automatically annotate each word with grammatical tags. Finally, the corpus was converted into UTF-8 encoded txt format and imported into AntConc and WordSmith. AntConc and WordSmith are both corpus analysis tools used in linguistics and text-based research, offering features like collocation networks, keyword analysis, word frequency lists, ideal for smaller datasets and educational purposes. Then the language data produced by AntConc and WordSmith were exported for data statistics and comparative analysis. The readability analysis at the textual level was performed using AntWordProfiler. It is developed by Laurence Anthony, which a free, specialized corpus analysis tool designed for vocabulary profiling and text readability analysis, particularly useful for language teachers, researchers, and materials developers.

The specific linguistic features of the translated text mainly include lexical, syntactic and textual features. The author conducted quantitative and qualitative searches and analyses at the lexical, syntactic and textual levels of the two English translations and the original text. The lexical level mainly involves the important parameters of tokens, types, and lexical density. The syntactic level mainly contains the analysis of the number of sentences and the average line length. The textual level focuses on the cohesion and readability. Therefore, this study attempt to

analyse the linguistic features of two translations at these three levels and figure out the factors which influence the formation of the translators' styles.

IV. RESEARCH PROCESS AND RESULTS

4.1 Lexical level

Lexical features in text analysis include token, type, type-token ratio (TTR), standardized TTR (STTR), word length distribution, mean word length (MWL), and lexical density.

4.1.1 Tokens and types

In corpus linguistics, types (unique word forms) and tokens (total word occurrences) are fundamental units of measurement. TTR, calculated as the ratio of types to tokens, serves as an indicator of vocabulary richness—higher values suggest greater lexical variety. However, for texts exceeding 1,000 words, TTR may become unreliable due to uneven type distribution, prompting researchers to adopt STTR (TTR per 1,000-word segments) for more accurate cross-text

Table 1.

Table 1. Data of tokens and types of Lin's and Luo's translations

	Tokens	Types	TTR	STTR
Source Text	320	208	65.00	81.33
Lin's Translation	499	237	47.49	67.00
Luo's Translation	521	262	50.29	70.40

As can be seen from Table 1, Lin's translation has 499 tokens and 237 types and Luo's translation has 521 tokens and 262 types. The STTR of Luo's translation is slightly higher than that of Lin's translation (70.40% > 67.00%), showing that Lin uses more narrow vocabulary. Both of Lin's and Luo's translations are longer than the original text containing 320 tokens, which indicates the two translations tend to highlight the implicit information present in the ancient text, making readers comprehend the text more easily.

4.1.2 Word length

The distribution of word length refers to the likelihood of different word lengths (i.e., the number of

comparisons(Gao&Zhou, 2024:3). Since the number of tokens in translations of *The Peach Colony* is less than 1000, the standardized type-token ratio in this study is fixed at 100.

Compared to statistical software like AntConc and Lancesbox, WordSmith can automatically calculate the STTR, which is more convenient and quicker. Therefore, at the lexical level, the author chose WordSmith to complete the statistical work. First, the author enter the WordSmith interface; set the Standardised Type/Token basis as 100; click the File button; select the txt form of Lin's and Luo's translations and the source text. Then click "make a word list" button to enter the statistics interface. Thus, we can obtain the vocabulary and sentence information of the three translations as

letters in a word) appearing in a text, while MWL stands for the mean word length, which reflects the overall complexity of the vocabulary to some degree. In English, the longer the word, the more pronounced the written character of the text and the more difficult it is to read, and conversely, the simpler the content of the text(Liu&Tang, 2022:264). WordSmith is capable of calculating the number of words of each length and determining the average word length.

Table 2 can be obtained by integrating the data produced by WordSmith.

Table 2. Word length and mean word length of Lin's and Luo's translations

Word Length Statistics	Lin's Translation	Luo's Translation
MWL (in characters)	4.20	4.49
1-letter words	3.20%	2.11%
2-letter words	14.03%	13.63%
3-letter words	26.05%	25.53%
4-letter words	19.84%	18.43%
5-letter words	15.23%	13.63%
6-letter words	7.82%	7.29%
7-letter words	6.81%	9.60%
≥8-letter words	6.61%	9.79%

In general, words typically consist of 2 to 5 letters, with an average word length of around 4 letters. If the average word length exceeds 4 letters, the language tends to be more complex. Conversely, when the average word length is shorter, the language becomes simpler, making the text easier to comprehend. As can be seen from the statistics in the above table, the mean word length of the two translations is greater than 4 letters, which indicates that the language of the translated text is relatively complex. It should be noted that Luo's translation is not only longer than Lin's in terms of mean word length, but also more inclined to use long words than Lin. The number of words with seven letters or more was higher than that of Lin, and the number of words with six or fewer letters was lower than that of Lin, suggesting that the words are longer and relatively more complex in Luo's translation. On the whole, Lin's translation tends to choose simpler words.

Luo's translation is flexible in its wording and carries more information, which helps to convey the original text accurately and completely.

4.1.3 Lexical density

Lexical density (LD) is the ratio of meaningful words within a text, and it reflects the amount of information the text conveys. This measure is essential for assessing the style of a translation. A higher lexical density indicates a greater percentage of content words, which suggests a higher capacity for carrying information and a more precise, detailed conveyance of the original meaning. On the other hand, a lower lexical density means an increased presence of functional words, which diminishes the text's informational value. In English, content words usually include verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. In terms of calculation methods, lexical density - the percentage of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) relative

to total word count. Briefly speaking, Lexical density is equal to the number of content words divided by the total number of words.

Table 3. Data of lexical density of the two translations

	Lin's Translation	Luo's Translation
Nouns	104	133
Verbs	73	70
Adjectives	21	29
Adverbs	27	30
Lexical Density(%)	45.09	50.29

The author uses AntConc to calculate the lexical density. Firstly, the two translations are assigned part-of-speech on the website “Free CLAWS web tagger”, which provides a free service that can automatically recognize the part-of-speech of each word in the imported text and annotate them. Secondly, the txt files of the two

Table 3.

In terms of the specific parameters reflecting the

Table 3, the use of nouns, adjectives and adverbs in Luo's translation is higher than that in Lin's translation, indicating that Luo's translation is clearer in terms of narrative expression, more comprehensive and specific in terms of information transmission, and more explicit. The above analysis shows that the use of content words in Luo's translation is richer than that of Lin's, which confirms Beck's view(2000:250) that the token/type ratio is directly proportional to the richness and diversity of the author/translator's lexical use.

4.2 Syntactic level

The mean sentence length refers to the average

Table 4. Sentence number and mean sentence length of the two translations

	Lin's Translation	Luo's Translation
Sentence Number	28	36
Mean (in words)	17.82	14.47
STD	7.20	6.82
ST/TT Ratio of Sentence Number	1:0.97	1:1.24

Example 1

ST: 初极狭，才通人。复行数十步，豁然开朗。土

地平旷，屋舍俨然，有良田美池桑竹之属。阡陌交通，鸡犬相闻。

Lin's Translation: At first the opening was very narrow, barely wide enough for one person to go in. After a dozen steps, it opened into a flood of light. He saw before his eyes a wide, level valley, with houses and fields and farms. There were bamboos and mulberries; farmers were working and dogs and chickens were running about.

Luo's Translation: His first steps took him into a

Table 4, Luo's translation contains significantly more sentences than Lin's translation (36>28), suggesting that Luo's version is more detailed and comprehensive. Additionally, the mean sentence lengths in both Luo's and Lin's translations are relatively similar, at 14.47 and 17.82 words, indicating that both translations favor medium-length sentences. In Example 1, it demonstrates distinct stylistic differences between the two translations: Luo's version employs more sentences with shorter average length, meticulously unpacking each original clause into standalone details while preserving auditory imagery like "crowing... barking... within hearing". In contrast, Lin's translation favors compound structures and omits specific elements like "crisscrossing paths", prioritizing narrative cohesion over granular accuracy.

In general, Luo's translation has a smaller mean sentence length and lower sentence length variability compared to Lin's translation. This suggests that Lin's translation tends to use more complex, longer sentences, likely to capture the implicit meanings of the original text and to ensure a smooth and faithful translation, enhancing clarity. On the other hand, Luo's translation uses simpler, more consistent sentence structures, which might indicate a more straightforward approach to translation. In analyzing the syntactic form of the translated text, the average sentence length of the source text is significantly shorter than the target text, with the source text averaging 15.62 words per sentence and the target text averaging 24.09 words (Laviosa, 1998:558). Luo's translation shows a similar pattern, suggesting that more attention was paid to adapting the translation to the language habits of the target audience, with the sentence structures more closely aligning with authentic English expressions.

passage that accommodated only the width of one person. After he progressed about scores of paces, it suddenly widened into an open field. The land was flat and spacious. There were houses arranged in good order with fertile fields, beautiful ponds, bamboo groves, mulberry trees and paths crisscrossing the fields in all directions. The crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs were within hearing of each other.

According to

4.3 Textual level

4.3.1 Conjunctions

The cohesion and coherence of discourse are two important directions in discourse analysis. Articulation mainly focuses on the relationship between the surface structure of discourse, such as the connection between words and phrases. Coherence, on the other hand, involves the deep logical relationship of the discourse content, which reflects the rational organization of information and the fluency of thought. As the original text of classical Chinese, *The Peach Colony* has a high degree of meaning, and there are usually no explicit connectors between the sentences, which makes the translator must pay special attention to the semantic connection of the context when translating. In the process of translation, the translator often needs to add some conjunctions to reveal the logical relationships implicit in the source language. This not only helps to improve the coherence of the translation, but also helps readers understand the underlying deep meaning of the original text, so as to better convey the artistic conception and cultural connotation of the original text. Therefore, when translating *The Peach Colony*, the translator should not only be faithful to the surface meaning of the original text, but also make appropriate adjustments at the level of language structure and cultural background, so that the translated text can not only be read fluently, but also reflect the ideological depth and literary charm of the source text.

Example 2

ST: 既出，得其船，便扶向路，处处志之。

Lin's Translation: The man found his boat and came back, marking with signs the route he had followed.

Luo's Translation: Once out, the fisherman found his

boat and rowed homeward, leaving marks all the way.

In Example 2, Lin's translation streamlines the original by merging actions into a single compound sentence, using "and" for time sequencing and "marking with signs" as a participial phrase to imply continuous action. Luo's version enhances cohesion through explicit adverbials like "Once out" "all the way" and a clearer action chain, reflecting the original's spatial progression.

According to statistics, both translations use a large number of conjunctions, with 52 in Lin's and 54 in Luo's. In the translation of *The Peach Colony*, the two translations present similar narrative styles and linguistic aesthetics through the use of connectives. The abundant connectives build a dense and smooth narrative context, and the logical connection is enhanced through compound sentences, so that the translated text produces delicate descriptions and stories in the English context. Both translators are committed to fully reproducing the narrative

layers and ideological connections of the original text in the translated language, forming a more immersive reading experience, conveying Tao Yuanming's transcendent artistic conception and reconstructing a complete picture of the world in *The Peach Colony*.

4.3.2 Readability

To effectively assess the readability of the English translation, AntWordProfiler software was used as analysis tool. Among these, ARI is a widely used readability measure typically employed to evaluate the reading difficulty of a text. Its value is influenced by the lexical difficulty and sentence length of the text—higher values correspond to lower readability. The calculation formula is: $ARI = 4.71 \times (\text{characters} / \text{words}) + 0.5 \times (\text{words} / \text{sentences}) - 21.43$. This formula helps evaluate the difficulty level of the translated text, providing a basis for improving its readability.

Table 5. Readability of the two translations

	Lin's Translation	Luo's Translation
Characters	2156	2408
Words	499	521
Sentences	28	36
ARI	7.82	7.58

As can be seen in

Table 5, from the point of view of discourse readability, the automatic readability index of Luo's translation is slightly lower than that of Lin's translation. This suggests that Luo's translation is syntactically and semantically concise, less difficult than Lin's, and therefore easier to read. This low level of difficulty makes Luo's translation more suitable for foreign readers who lack background knowledge of ancient China, and can improve their reading experience and comprehension.

Table 6. Readability analysis in AntWordProfiler

Lin's Translation	Luo's Translation
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The core principle of AntWordProfiler to analyze text readability is based on vocabulary frequency statistics and hierarchical word list comparison. It categorizes words into frequency bands. AntWordProfiler comes with 3 General Service Lists (GSLs), which are classic vocabulary lists. The coverage of GSL 1 and GSL 2 in general discourse is 81.3%, the coverage of GSL 3 in scientific discourse is 85%, and the sum of the GSL 1 and GSL 2 indices can often be used to measure the legibility of a general text, and the higher the coefficient, the stronger the legibility of the text.

1_gsl_1st	86.40%	83.33%
2_gsl_2nd	6.00%	5.36%
3awl	0.20%	0.77%

The readability analysis conducted through AntWordProfiler demonstrates distinct lexical

Table 6. Lin's version exhibits stronger dominance of basic vocabulary with 86.40% coverage of first-tier GSL words compared to Luo's 83.33%, reflecting a more fundamental lexical foundation. Both translations show similar modest proportions of second-tier vocabulary (6.00% for Lin versus 5.36% for Luo), while Luo's text incorporates nearly four times more academic words (0.77%) than Lin's (0.2%), suggesting Luo's translation employs more specialized terminology. This pattern indicates that while both translations maintain relatively simple vocabulary overall, Lin's version leans toward greater accessibility through higher concentrations of core vocabulary, whereas Luo's work introduces slightly more advanced lexical elements that may appeal to readers with stronger English proficiency or academic interests. The divergence in word choice strategies likely reflects different translation priorities regarding audience accommodation and textual sophistication. According to the sum of the GSL 1 and GSL 2, the readability of Lin's translation is slightly greater than that of Luo's translation (92.4% > 88.69%), so Lin's translation is suitable for domestic readers with background knowledge of ancient Chinese culture.

V. DISCUSSION

This study's comparative analysis of Lin Yutang's and Luo Jingguo's translations of *The Peach Colony* reveals distinct stylistic tendencies that extend beyond surface-level linguistic choices, offering broader implications for corpus-based translation studies. While Lin's translation prioritizes fluency and concision—evidenced by lower lexical density (45.09% vs. 50.29%) and compound structures—Luo's version leans toward explicitness and academic rigor, with richer noun/adjective use.

characteristics between the two translations as

The corpus-driven methodology, while robust in quantifying stylistic patterns, has limitations. First, the small-scale, single-text corpus restricts generalizability; future studies could expand to multi-text corpora to distinguish translator-specific traits from text-specific adaptations. Second, qualitative analysis, though applied, could be deepened with extra data to contextualize stylistic choices.

These findings invite reconsideration of “fidelity” in classical translation. Luo's adherence to source-text granularity challenges the notion that readability necessitates simplification, while Lin's omissions raise questions about cultural loss. Future research could integrate reader-response surveys to assess how stylistic differences impact cross-cultural reception, bridging corpus analysis with empirical translation studies. Ultimately, this study not only maps two translators' strategies but also exemplifies how corpus tools can unveil the invisible negotiations between literary preservation and audience accommodation—a dynamic central to advancing World Literature paradigms.

VI. CONCLUSION

Through the above statistical and empirical analysis, it is found that the results of the two English translations of *The Peach Colony* are generally similar in terms of language data such as standardized type/token ratio, mean word length, use of conjunctions. However, due to the different translation purposes, knowledge levels, literary literacy, and social identities of the translators, the translations of Lin and Luo present different translation styles. To a certain extent, these differences may affect the dissemination and reception of translations in the other countries. Different translation styles may lead to different feelings in the reader's understanding, acceptance, and

appreciation of the text, which in turn will affect the communication effect of the translation. Lin's translation demonstrates an approach characterized by concise vocabulary, streamlined sentence structures, and higher readability, while Luo's version exhibits academic precision through lexical richness, detailed clause segmentation, and explicit cultural retention, favoring textual fidelity and scholarly rigor.

This study conducts preliminary statistical and empirical analysis of the linguistic metrics of the two translations from a limited perspective through corpus technology, which is not enough to fully reflect the overall picture of the translator's translation style, nor can it fully reveal the intrinsic relationship between the translator's style and the acceptance of the translation. Due to the limitations of research methods and data scope, future research can further combine more dimensional analysis, such as cultural background, translators' personal opinions, and readers' responses, to explore the relationship between translation style and translation communication effect more comprehensively.

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